

Mate-

237 rials which could well be made use of, such as skin, bone, and shell, are hardly used at all.

[189] Putnam claims that they are not used in his area, although he writes that sometimes the Pygmies wear horn charms borrowed or stolen from the villagers. Virtually no use other than magical is made of bone, horn, or shell, as far as one can tell from reports from any part of the Ituri. Among the archers there are few of the skin quivers and bow covers mentioned by Schebesta (1952, 124). Putnam (MS) further states that he has never known these Pygmies to skin game; they cook and eat the skin as well as the flesh.

237 Schebesta (1952, 124), however, writes that
411 hide quivers are plentiful, particularly in the western part of the forest, less so among the archers in the east, where arrows are always carried in a bundle held in the left hand. Schebesta (1952, 124) also mentions the wrist protector, made of monkey skin, used by

237 archers. He makes other reference to the use of
[291] skin as belts and for adornment and, occasion-
[301] ally, the use of the skin of a Colobus monkey to
[184] cover the back, but he does not specify to which Mbuti his remarks apply. We assume that, unless he specifies otherwise, he refers to the archers among whom he worked on his second trip.

(P. 165-B)

[ARCHERS]

224 stems in a special way they form cylinders
[824] which, when struck on the ground, make an effective clap. The women then go ahead and by the loud beating of their petards put up game for the men to shoot with their metal-tipped arrows. This form of hunt is usually successful in killing a number of animals, which are shared among the various hunting bands that took part in the beat.

Elephant hunting takes place only among those Mbuti who use spears (Fig. 10; Schebesta, 1941, 106); bows and arrows are quite incapable of doing more than blind an elephant, despite the reports of imaginative travelers to the contrary. Those archers who use only bow and arrow do not hunt elephant. Wild boar, similarly, are killed only with spear, especially when they appear near the camp. Monkeys and chimpanzees, considered as delicacies, are pur-
• [262]
[P. 173-B]

[ARCHERS]

sued and shot with bow and arrow whenever the opportunity arises but are never the object of organized hunting. Other smaller animals and birds are hunted individually; those that take refuge in holes in trees are smoked out. 224 [262].

Schebesta's account suggests that, despite his proficiency at the hunt, the Pygmy takes care to protect himself against its attendant dangers and disappointments by securing the cooperation of the God of the Forest, and of his ancestors, and by making use of magic. He carries charms, observes various taboos, and performs certain rites—mostly sympathetic. It is not clearly stated, however, exactly which rites and charms are used by which particular Pygmies; there is obviously a great deal of variation. Schebesta clearly indicates, however, that among the archers there seems to be a considerable amount of hunting magic and ritual, witnessed by their use of the special whistles (*Efe: segebe*), magic formulas, invocation, and ritual practices he describes. 224 [789] [776] [769]

[P. 173-C]

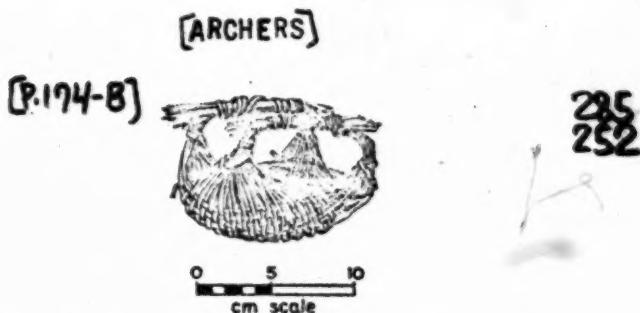


FIG. 11. Fruit press, archers, Kilo District, East Ituri. An unusual utensil, found in the hunting camp of an eastern archer band, used for extracting juice.

GATHERING

Meat, however, forms only about 30 per cent of the diet (Schebesta, 1941, 11). The archers' staple is essentially vegetarian, and this is provided almost exclusively by women. First place goes to the plantains, sweet potatoes, and peanuts acquired from the villagers in return for meat or service. But the forest itself provides an abundance of roots, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and edible fungi, all of which the Pygmy uses. Schebesta gives no details as to the exact proportions of these various foodstuffs consumed, so it is impossible to get any idea of the dietetics of this group. He also mentions the place of snails and grubs, termites and ants, larvae, and certain types of snake in the diet. Fish form only a small part of the diet, but the womenfolk catch crabs and small fish in the shallow streams, using their hands or small nets.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

[P. 175-C]

way is theirs to cook and eat without having to be shared. 852
22

DRINKS, NARCOTICS, AND
STIMULANTS 276

As stimulants Schebesta mentions *bangi* (hemp), its counterpart from the forest plant *medeaka*, and the kola nut. Palm wine, banana wine, and tobacco are available only from the villagers' plantations.

FOOD RESTRICTION

Clan totems (nearly always animal, rarely vegetable) are always taboo; even indirect contact must be avoided. There are other ta- 262 •

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 176-A]

[ARCHERS]

- [P. 176-A]
• 262 boos, mostly acquired during initiation, not connected with the clan totem. These two classes of taboos are responsible for what food restrictions there are.

TRADE

433 The food quest is, in Schebesta's words, the
439 alpha and omega of Mbuti economy. It is a
177 day-to-day economy. The supposed uncertainty
22 of adequate supply is given as the reason for the
alleged dependency of the Mbuti on the villagers.
At times the Mbuti have no food; at others, they have an excess. But living in a symbiotic relationship with the villagers, the Pygmies are able to maintain a steady diet, relying on the villagers in times of shortage and in times of plenty supplying them with forest produce. According to Schebesta, their relationship is based on this exchange. The Pygmy not only has come to rely on village plantations to supplement his own inadequate diet, but he has come to rely on villager-manufactured tools and utensils. Jadin (1936) says that the Pygmies know no resources other than those available through hunting and gathering, despite villager domination.

[ARCHERS]

613 larly a child, who is said always to respect his
614 patrilineal totem, respects his mother's totem
[608] when living with her group. A man also ob-
[784] serves the totemic restrictions of his *kart*-
[262] brother. The totem is always taboo for the
Mbuti. One may never eat it, and often not kill
it, touch it, or even eat the food normally eaten
[753] by the totemic species. Breach of taboo is be-
[661] lieved to involve serious illness or death.

The relationship of the Mbuti to their totem
is one not of fear but rather of respect, which
Schebesta says is evidenced by their addressing
it as "father" or "grandfather," and by the be-
lief that the totem animal gave birth to the
first member of the lineal group observing that
totem.

[779] To this belief that the clan ancestor de-
scended from the totem is allied the belief that
on death the Mbuti is transformed into his
totem. Schebesta finds it difficult to reconcile
this with his analysis of Mbuti religion, and to
see just which vital principle it is that becomes
the totem. Connected with this difficulty is the
[761] all-important belief in *meghe*, the vital force
[778] emanating from the totem and immanent, but
in different degrees, in all human beings.

Schebesta cites no individual or sex totems. As
he sees it, totemism follows strictly lineage lines.

MAGIC

761
778 Schebesta finds the link between the religious
[p. 192-8]

[NET HUNTERS]

224 Putnam describes a ceremony that takes place at that time. A man other than the hunter cuts off a section of the skin, a little at a time, distributing it for all to eat. When he has cut down to the inner wall of the abdomen and everyone has had a piece, he stands aside for the youngest son of the successful hunter to bite through the wall, whereupon the bloated elephant bursts. Putnam says that this ceremony is repugnant to the Pygmies, who dislike raw meat, and particularly repugnant to the child, but he does not explain the practice.

251 Following this ceremony, the animal is
252 quickly and completely butchered, and the
261 meat is cooked. The Pygmies eat as much as they can. They partly boil and partly dry some (the only form of preservation of foodstuff ever practiced by them) and take this to the village.

224 In 1951, Putnam gave me another version of this form of hunt, in which the Pygmy thrusts the spear into the bladder of the elephant, and, if he sees that the urine is released, he returns to camp knowing that it will die within a few days. The procedure is then as above. Anne Putnam (1954, 93) mentions a net hunter who tracked and killed an elephant at a time when there was no shortage of food, simply because he felt the urge to do so.

Schebesta (1941, 106 ff.) mentions two types
[P 207-8]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 208-A]

[NET HUNTERS]

276 [P. 211-A]
lagers, but the net hunters also make a pipe by twisting a bark strip into a cone, lining the end with fire-resistant leaves (Fig. 31b).

FOOD RESTRICTIONS

- 262 Putnam's information on food restrictions
614 differs from that given for the archers. While
[84] there are clan names and clan totems,¹ opinion among the net hunters themselves seems vague as to the exact extent of the restrictions arising from these totems. Probably, if the occasion arose (though the commonest totem animals in this particular group are the leopard and the chimpanzee, not important features of the local diet), a hungry Pygmy would turn a blind eye to the rules of totemism. Putnam says that these rules call for avoidance not only of the animal as well as of its flesh, but also of its favorite food. The animals are not regarded as representing the ancestors themselves but are associated with them in some myth.

[NET HUNTERS]

- 262 Lesser taboos are observed by children until they reach the age of puberty. These, according to the Pygmies themselves, result from the fact that a certain kind of food makes a certain child sick and thenceforth is taboo to it.
- 262 There are also certain food restrictions during periods of puberty, pregnancy, and mourning, and others emphasizing the opposition of the sexes. Putnam gives as an example the refusal of men to eat frogs and toads, which women gladly eat, and suggests as a reason the association of the amphibians with water and land, and that they might bring about rainfall adverse to hunting.
- [825]

TRADE

- 439 As with the archers, great stress is laid by Putnam on the present dependency of the net hunters on the villager plantations for vegetable food, particularly the plantain. In principle the system is the same as that outlined by Schebesta. Putnam says that the relationship is inter-familial and inherited according to the principle of patrilineal descent. There is no strict account kept of trade, or any system of equivalent values other than mutual satisfaction. But the villager, if displeased, may withhold bananas, and the Pygmy, if not satisfied, may leave and go to hunt with another band attached to another patron. (Putnam uses the term "host.") When
- [571]

[177] : Very possibly of village origin.
[P. 211-B]

[NET HUNTERS]

614 Rules concerning the clan totem vary, in theory and practice. Its flesh may never be eaten by members of the clan and, as far as possible, the animal is avoided—alive or dead. If the clan is dispersed, its seceding factions tend to forget their own totem and adopt the totems of the dominant clans in whose areas they settle, evidently, in fact, effectively changing clan affiliation.

784 The second kind of taboo mentioned by Putnam is the sex taboo symbolizing the differences
522 in male and female activities. Women and
• [262] children eat frogs and toads; men refuse to touch them. As mentioned above (p. 211), this
[825] difference is probably connected with the as-
[823] sociation between these amphibians and both water (portending disaster) and land (the hunt).

784 The third type of taboo is the taboo applicable to times of crisis in the life cycle—puberty, pregnancy, and mourning. At such times certain taboos are observed, but they vary from band to band, and there is no detailed information.

262 Lastly, Putnam mentions the existence of

¹ By "clan" Putnam means a patriclan or gens.

[p. 239-8]

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.239-C]

personal taboos, which simply involve the decision of individuals to abstain from eating certain foods. These may be the result of some near disaster involving the taboo animal, or the result of some physical allergy. Many personal taboos are acquired during puberty, but they can be acquired any time. During puberty a taboo may be "given" to the individual on the decision of his relatives who observe that he has an allergy to a certain food; or they may be, and at other times always are, acquired by personal volition. Porcupines, snakes, and slow game not used as clan totems are subject to personal taboo.

These forest animals that symbolize clans, sexes, and individual idiosyncracies, says Putnam, are personified by the Mbuti, who believe that they used to be able to talk and were on an equal footing with human beings.

Thus the totemism of the net hunters seems to be very different from that described by Schebesta for the archers, among whom there was neither sex nor individual totemism (p. 191). Further, Putnam denies that there is any belief, at least among the net hunters, in totemic ancestral spirits such as the *lodi* described by Schebesta. There are *genii loci*, *satani* who inhabit well-known caves, ravines, or hills, but Putnam says that these are not associated with clans.

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776
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[614]

A fourth factor might be added: While the net hunt quickly scares animals away from the area around the hunting camp, necessitating frequent changes of site, the archery technique neither depletes the game so quickly nor frightens it away. An archer band can therefore remain confined to a smaller area, near the village, while the net hunters sometimes must wander several days' march away from their patrons. The more nomadic group also has constantly fresh supplies of vegetable growth at its disposal, thus decreasing the need, which is apparently felt by the more settled archers, for plantation products. (262) •

Thus at once we can see the possible economic, social, and political implications of the difference in hunting technique and how these implications follow in fact. 184
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224

Gathering occupies a similar position of social and economic importance in each type of community. It is regarded primarily as the work of women, though, wherever it calls for tree climbing, it is undertaken by men. Among (p. 244-D) 222
184
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CP 245-A7

222 both groups it appears that food acquired by
184 gathering is more prominent in the Mbuti diet
462 than the product of hunting.

222 Honey gathering, a primarily male activity,
222 is the only major seasonal activity. There are
222 indications from both groups that the Mbuti
184 regard this as a festive season and that it was
[462] possibly once of greater social significance than
it is now, when recreation and variety are more
easily had through contact with the villagers.
Nonetheless it is still more important to both
groups than can be accounted for by its economic
aspect alone.

27 There is not enough information on drinks,
262 narcotics, and stimulants, nor on food restric-
128 tions, to allow for these to be placed in a systematic
framework.

439 With regard to trade, we have no details for
either the net hunters or the archers on this
extremely important point of contact between
the Mbuti and the villagers. Trade with vil-
lagers exists in both Mbuti groups, and both
Schebesta and Putnam attach great importance
to it. Neither, however, explains it satisfac-
torily.

PLATE 36 ¹/_A

COLLECTING HONEY, EPULU DISTRICT, CENTRAL ITURI

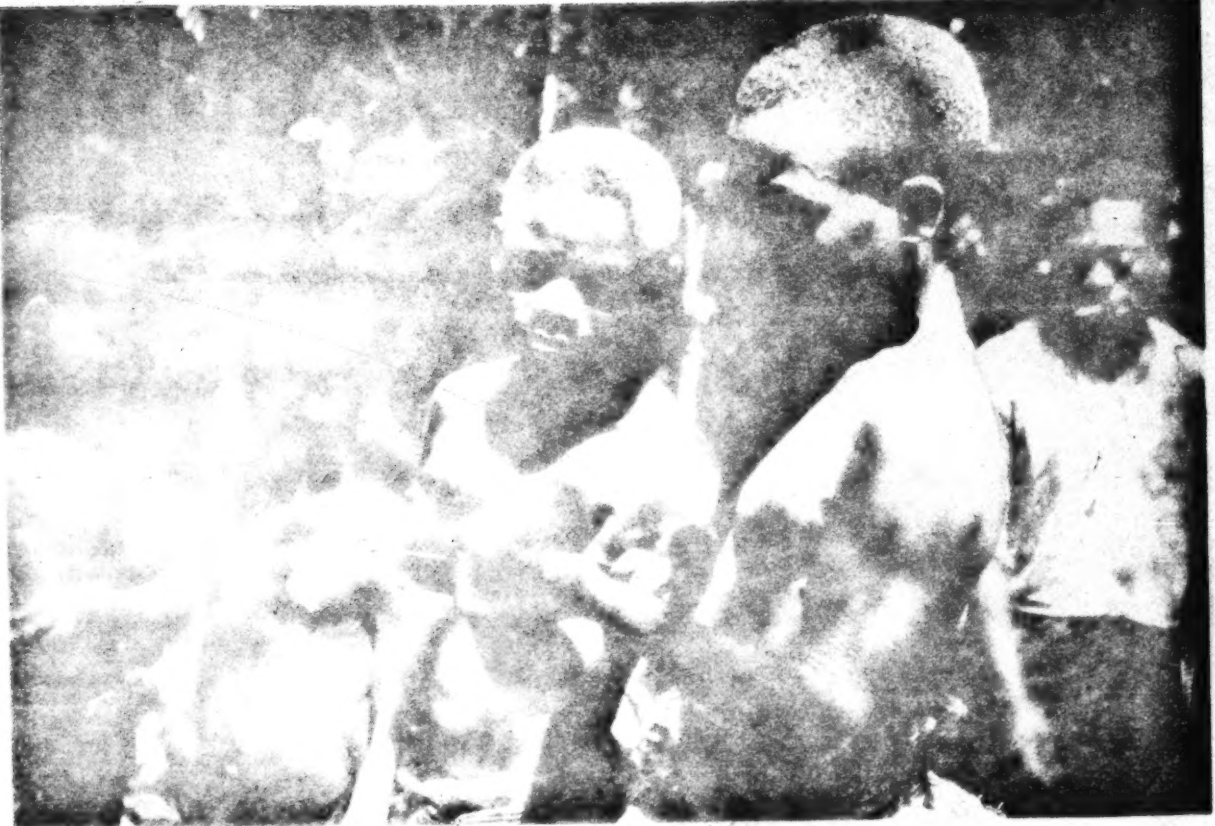
- 222 . a. Honey is generally found high in the treetops in the fork of a limb or in a bole. More
462 rarely, it is found in the main trunk a few feet above the ground. Only when the hive is in
412 a fallen trunk on the ground itself do women collect honey; at other times it is exclusively
the work of men and youths. An ax or adze is used to enlarge the opening, the bees are then
smoked out, and the honey is withdrawn by hand.
- 222 b. As with the rest of Mbuti food economy, honey is eaten as gathered, never stored.
262 Comb sections are eaten raw; the liquid is usually warmed over a fire and drunk. If the
252 honey contains too much dirt, it is wrapped in leaves and soaked in water which is then
[251] drunk.

1, /Plate 36 appears on page 305--Analyst/
A

[P.304]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbutil

142
302
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222



/Plate 36-B/

/Caption appears on p. 304/
[P305-B]

- 132 Where in the villages, and in the plantations that surround them, the midday temperatures soar well into the nineties, and the ground is covered with a dry, choking dust that quickly turns to mud, in the shade of the forest the world is cool and fresh, with only rare places, such as along river banks or at salt licks, where sunlight reaches the
- 136 ground without first being filtered through a leafy roof. Also from the point of view of comfort, and of health, where village conditions lead to gatherings of flies and mosquitoes, these disease bearers are seldom if ever seen in the depths of the forest, except at such sites as are easily avoided. The Mbuti frequently compare their lot, in these re-
- [186] spects, with that of the villagers, who in turn grudgingly admit to some advantages of forest life.
- 312 Another important contrast between forest and village life is in the water supply. The forest is interlaced with innumerable streams, any of which can be drunk from with impunity. A hunting camp is always located near a stream, but never stays in the one vicinity long enough to foul the water. A village remains in the same location, however, for three years or so, and the local water supply invariably becomes polluted. The villagers have some resistance to infection, but the Mbuti often have none and quickly become sick if they stay too long in a village.
- 136 But it is with regard to food even more than shelter or water that
262 the forest seems to favor the Mbuti. Throughout the year, without fail, there is an abundant supply of game and of vegetable foods. There are half a dozen different kinds of antelope that are particularly abundant, apart from supplementary sources of meat such as birds,
- [137] monkeys, chimpanzees, and divers grubs and insects. The forest also supplies a number of edible roots, notably the sweet *itaba*, and many different varieties of mushrooms, nuts, berries and fruits. All the latter may vary in abundance the one from the other, according to the time of year, but throughout the year at any one time there will be an ample supply, in both quantity and variety.
- 262 The only truly seasonal food in the forest economy of the Mbuti is honey, and it is of major importance in the diet. It is also of major
- [621] importance as a focal point in the constant process of fission and fusion that characterizes Mbuti society.
- 778 The apparent benevolence of the forest towards the Mbuti extends still further. The materials for the making of shelter, clothing, and all other necessary items of material culture are all to hand at a mo-
- [313] ment's notice. Firewood, equally, is everywhere in abundance. It is

[12] the most general nature of the forest context and in absolute igno-
[114] rance of the structure of the forest world. But this in turn leads to
another reason for considering the village world first, for the universal-
ity of the misconception and its common cause are in themselves
highly significant. The misconception, that is to say the notion of the
Mbuti as a subordinate and dependent people is, although a myth in
actuality, nonetheless a structural factor of the greatest importance,
and it is the relationship of the Mbuti to the village world that leads
to some of the most interesting elements in the over-all social frame-
work of Mbuti society as it is today. It is not our intent to say what
elements of Mbuti society are caused by their relationship with the
villagers, but it is certain that many elements, such as the constant
process of fragmentation, fission and fusion, take on special signifi-
cance in light of that relationship. Even the most central religious
[178] institutions, sacred to the forest, appear to be in the process of adapta-
tion, allowing for and encouraging a widening of the Mbuti social
horizon, bringing about a wider sense of unity (both religious and
political) than apparently existed before.

439 Ostensibly the relationship is based upon the economic dependence
• 262 of the Mbuti on the villagers for food and metal. Both manioc and
bananas (sweet as well as plantain) are grown throughout the Ituri
region and jointly form the staple. Both foods are eagerly sought and
consumed by all Mbuti, who in the forest have nothing akin to the
banana or to the large manioc root. The small, sweet forest *itaba* root
[222] has to be grubbed for, and, as the Mbuti say, it is much easier to get
manioc from the villagers. Other village foods consumed by the Mbuti
are groundnuts, corn, rice and beans but, as for the villagers, they are
supplementary. Any of these foods may be carried off to the forest
camps and consumed there. Indeed in any village on almost any day
[482] one is likely to see a pygmy woman or two filling her carrying basket to
[462] capacity with such foods and returning to the forest camp. If the
hunting camp is nearby, a regular supply line is maintained, and even
forest food becomes supplementary in Mbuti diet.

439 When in the village the Mbuti also have access to luxuries such as
palm wine, and to certain trade goods; tobacco and second-hand
clothes are the most important such items.

[325] Having no knowledge of metalworking,¹ the Mbuti are without a

[648] ¹ A few Mbuti prisoners were taught by the Belgian administrator at Mambasa how
[177] to hammer arrow tips as part of his campaign to "liberate" the Mbuti from their de-
pendence upon the villagers.

224 out of that vicinity, however, they keep track of it, and they send out
433 scouts to help them decide the best location for their next hunting
camp.

439 Insofar as the Mbuti are dependent upon the villagers for village
• 262 foods, thus far are they dependent also for certain items of material
252 culture, in metal, pottery and wood. Even so, of the village foods
415 only rice and beans (neither of which can be considered as staples even
* 177 among the villagers) demand pottery or metal cooking vessels. Trade
vessels of aluminum are rapidly replacing all pottery vessels. Manioc,
plantains, corn and peanuts can be roasted, the sweet banana and
peanut can be eaten raw, and manioc can also be eaten without cook-
ing if it is first soaked in cold water for several days.

439 However, in every Mbuti village camp each household will boast at
415 least one metal vessel, and there will be one or two wooden mortars
* 177 and pestles for common usage. In addition, there is only the metal
439 knife blade which might be said to be necessary to the Mbuti in their
412 village life, for peeling, scraping and cutting the manioc root, and the
* 177 metal ax blade needed for cutting the saplings used in the construc-
tion of either village-type houses or forest-style huts. The technologi-
cal dependence of the Mbuti upon the villagers, in the village, is then
not great, and is directly contingent upon Mbuti dependence upon
village foods in the same context.

325 We shall see that in the forest context, as with food, there is no es-
sential dependence either on materials such as metal, or on skill in
224 working them. It has been argued that the Mbuti hunt is dependent
411 upon metal arrow-points, spear blades, and knife blades. It is not. We
shall see that the Mbuti frequently prefer to use the poisoned arrows
that have only a fire-hardened tip, for sound practical reasons; that
they use the spear primarily for defense rather than offense, and in
any case still retain knowledge of the fire-hardened point and the be-
lief that it is as effective as metal except, possibly, against buffalo and
elephant. Old Mbuti assert that fire-hardened spears are effective even
412 against the largest game. Slit bamboo and slit reeds offer adequate
cutting surfaces, though they dull quickly and are seldom used to-
day; they could, however, successfully replace the metal knife as far
as the forest life of the Mbuti is concerned. There are certain types of
[322] vine that have a highly abrasive surface and can be used for scraping
[324] itaba roots. Of all the village utensils, the two that the Mbuti would
miss the most would be the machete and the ax blade. The machete
is used for cutting the light fito saplings that form the framework for

THE LIFE CYCLE

133

bull, 1960[1]), I shall keep the description here to those essentials 881
concerned with the structural implications of the *elima*.

The fact that it is not an individual family affair, to be concealed with shame as best possible, is doubly emphasized when two girls in a band, of quite different lineages, "see the blood" within a few days of each other. There will then be a joint *elima*. And there is also the selection by the girl or girls of the *bamelima*, the friends she likes and wants to accompany her for the duration of the festival, living with her in the *elima* hut. They will be drawn from her female age mates, and may or may not already have had their own *elima*. If they have not yet seen the blood, participation in their friend's *elima* will excuse them from having one of their own when the time comes. If a girl sees the blood, and a close friend thinks she is about to see it as well, the *elima* will be delayed, perhaps for several weeks. (561)

As with birth, this life-cycle crisis does not evoke any sense of need 881
for urgent ritual action, protective or otherwise. Its significance is of 82
a different order. It is regarded as essentially natural and therefore good. Also as with birth, the personal importance of the occasion (778)
leads to an establishment of personal contact with the forest, a reification of the direct bond between the individual and the forest world; but the social importance of puberty for the band is recognized, so the band as such takes certain measures, both social and ritual, to mark the occasion.

The girl or girls with blood are expected to keep to their homes and 881
an extension may be built onto one of their huts, or onto that of any friend or relative who is willing to house the *bamelima*. Every *elima* girl with blood has to choose a personal assistant, and the choice is left entirely to her, and again may fall on a relative, though more often it is a very close friend, of the same age group. They then invite other friends to join them in the *elima* hut, when it is ready. The assistants share such restrictions as are placed upon the *elima* girls, except that they are more free to leave the hut unaccompanied. There are few restrictions anyway, it seems, and they are mainly concerned with maintaining adherence to the schedule of instruction and activities. There are some minor food prohibitions, based on the 881
personal taboos of the *elima* girls and their assistants, which in turn 262
are based on their individual reactions to these foods as young children. If a certain food makes a child sick it may be forbidden to him until puberty, when he may try it again and abandon the taboo if it no longer affects him adversely. Sometimes, but not always, there is 881

Mbuti

Congo-Kinshasa FOI

P 164

WAYWARD SERVANTS

224 sections to join together temporarily, and the archers share the same
628 two techniques of elephant hunting that are used by the net-hunters.
825 Some hunters like to make a kill on their own, not so much to gain
[554] status, for such status is virtually meaningless, but for personal satisfaction. They will trail an elephant, then run up underneath it and jab their spear several times into its belly, aiming at the bladder. If they see urine spurt out they know the elephant will die in a day or so, and they will return to their camp, which will pack up and trail the dying elephant and build a new camp around it.

Alternatively, four or five Mbuti will lie in wait, and when an elephant appears one will stand out on the trail in front of it so that it stops. At that moment one who is concealed behind will run out and slice the tendon of one of the rear heels. The elephant will spin around, partially immobilized, whereupon another concealed strategically will run out and slice the other tendon. The elephant can then be killed at leisure, though still not with ease.

P
[22] The killing of an elephant will inevitably bring other sections of the band to the scene, and the meat will be shared among all. The moment it is finished, however, the band will again split up and remain this way for the rest of the year. Thus the *begbe*, during the honey season, remains the only time when the band assembles as such for the purposes of acting together as an economic unit. It is unlikely that more than one elephant will be killed during the year; the maximum I know of in one territory is three, and this was considered highly exceptional. Further, although elephant hunting may result in the assembly of a number of sections, or even of the total band, it does not involve communal activity.

P
[62] Neither the archers nor the net-hunters, despite the abundance of wildlife around them, acknowledge many totemic restrictions, though
224
613 they could well do so without suffering. But the very abundance also
614 renders it unnecessary to have institutionalized methods of insuring even distribution. Among the villagers, whose supply of meat depends
C
[613] almost entirely on the Mbuti and is consequently unpredictable and
[614] erratic, totemic observances are common and rigidly enforced, and can
[439] be seen to affect distribution to some extent, as the totemic animals include those most frequently caught.

P
224 Such totemic observances among the Mbuti that do not derive
613 from individual allergies are associated with membership in the
614 patrilineal lineage. The animals so respected are without exception
• 262 those least frequently killed, hunted or eaten. By far the most wide-
825

THE ECONOMY

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spread totem is the leopard, and even those who do not have the leopard as their clan totem, and can therefore lawfully kill the animal, say they would never eat the meat. Some give the reason that the leopard eats human beings, and in this way anyone eating a leopard is also eating human flesh. Whereas insofar as clans themselves are suspect as being possibly of village origin, so are the totems, and indeed totemic observance itself. But there is no doubt that the leopard is throughout the forest considered by the Mbuti as having supernatural connotations. More of this will be seen when we discuss the *molimo*, the men's religious association, which is active primarily at the time of death of a member of the hunting band. The derivation of the term is unknown, and it has no translation, but *moli* is the word used by the same Mbuti for the leopard. The animal is considered beautiful because of the grace of its movements, and in this context it is likened to a dancer. It is respected for its power and skill as a hunter. It is feared for the way it brings death, to animals or human beings, swiftly and silently and inevitably. There are many who do not claim the leopard as their totem, but who nonetheless would not even touch a dead leopard, let alone kill one or eat it.

The chimpanzee and the buffalo are probably the next two most commonly given totems, and they are also animals that have the least possible interest among Mbuti as a source of food. The chimpanzee because, they say, it is nearly human, and the buffalo simply because it is such bad eating. Other Mbuti who may eat these animals seldom do. Buffalo is tough and unpleasant-tasting, they say, and is eaten only if there is nothing else. Also, any sensible Mbuti will seek to get out of a buffalo's way rather than to challenge and kill it. There is no merit in killing a buffalo, as there is in killing an elephant. To seek one out is considered a foolishness, the mark of a stupid and conceited hunter. To be attacked by one and to escape are considered a sign of good luck; if the buffalo is killed in defense, however, that only brings incidental fame. If, as sometimes happens, a buffalo is constantly making a nuisance of itself in a particular part of the territory that cannot always be avoided, and presents a real danger to hunters and gatherers, then five or six of the great hunters will set out to kill it, with considerable trepidation. It is above all an animal to be avoided for every possible practical reason.

The chimpanzee, on the other hand, is avoided for more personal reasons, largely associated with its semihuman appearance. Someone who does not like to eat chimpanzee will also be likely to refuse to

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224 eat any monkey. Sometimes older men will eat chimpanzee, and this
262 seems to be more so among the archers than the net-hunters. Cer-
825 tainly, chimpanzees are more likely prey for the archer than the net-
hunter.

[14] Other animals stated as clan totems are similarly either undesirable
for good practical reasons, or so rare that their exclusion is of little
practical significance.

262 Restrictions sometimes cited as "totemic" by the Mbuti, and which
include the more common and desirable game, have proven in my
experience to be not totemic at all, but due to personal allergies. Any
food that makes a child sick will be forbidden to it until it grows
older. At puberty (i.e., when he or she is old enough to participate
in the *elima*) he may try that food again, and either continue the re-
striction or abandon it, according to the results. Again at marriage he
may try it. From then on he is unlikely to make any further attempts,
though nothing is to stop him. There are plenty of alternatives, and
exchange on grounds of taste is about as frequent as economic shar-
ing. There is certainly nothing hereditary about such restrictions.

224 Apart from this, the Mbuti make ample use of the game offered by
262 the forest. Their technology, limited by the same environment to
nets, bows and arrows, spears and vine snares, is more than adequate
for their subsistence. Perhaps some measure of the sufficiency of sup-
ply is the fact that little effort is made to tap the more difficult sources
of food, such as the fowl and monkeys that throng the upper branches
of the trees. An even more surprising rejection of a much easier source
is the rejection of fish. Fish of many kinds fill the forest streams and
rivers, and are caught with the utmost ease, yet they are considered as
food fit only for children.

222 On the other hand certain ants, termites, snails and grubs are con-
262 sidered as delicacies and eagerly sought, though these are probably
more properly considered under gathering.

222 GATHERING

[124] Gathering among both net-hunters and archers is similar, and al-
462 though primarily the concern of the women, there is no shame in a
man gathering any vegetable foods he may come across. The gathering
of termites, grubs and so forth is equally practiced by men and
women.

The foods most commonly gathered for daily consumption are

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WAYWARD SERVANTS

- 222 and since the forest is benevolent the songs thus are thought to se-
533 cure protection. In point of fact they do, for the throaty chorus of
189 even two or three Mbuti women is enough to scare away any game.
[m8] When not singing the women beat their hands together, shout or talk
[m9] loudly to each other, for the same purpose. I know of only one woman
injured while gathering. She was alone, which was the first mistake,
and the first question asked when news came back to camp that she
had been attacked by a buffalo was the apparently surprising one,
"Was she not singing?" She was not, nor was she "talking to the
forest," and that was her second mistake, the consequence of which
was death. The Mbuti are practical enough to recognize the "noise"
value of song, but they see more in it than that.
- 262 When the Mbuti are near a source of plantation foods and can
acquire them by one means or another, then their daily diet is largely
vegetable. The meal taken before going hunting and the snack on the
hunt are both likely to be entirely vegetarian, meat being eaten only
at the evening meal. Even then it may be served with one or another
[222] vegetable. Even when the Mbuti are far away from a supply of village
foods and living entirely on the forest they still rely heavily on vegeta-
ble foods, and gathering must be considered at least equally important
with hunting as a subsistence activity. From what I was able to see,
this is true among the archers as well as among the net-hunters. It is
also true that throughout the forest the supply of forest vegetable
foods, though varying, is constant and sufficient, frequently ample. If
there is any time when there is a greater abundance than at other
times, it is during the honey season.

HONEY

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222 Falling approximately in the middle of our calendar year, and last-
ing a full two months, the honey season is of vital importance to the
Mbuti not only from a nutritional point of view but structurally.
- [621] We have already seen how at this time the net-hunting bands split up
[578] into minimal sections, separating hostile or factious elements and
consolidating existing friendships, so that when the band re-forms it
will have resolved most of the internal dissensions built up over the
previous year, on the whole reaffirming old loyalties but always assert-
ing some that are new. The archer band, normally segmented, joins
together during the honey season in what is essentially the same
process. It is significant that the honey season should be marked

THE ECONOMY

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It is significant that the honey season should be marked among the Mbuti by a special type of song, musically distinct from the other types, and by a ritual dance involving ritual use of fire. I have seen this dance throughout the forest, and heard the same distinctive honey song, the latter being made all the more distinct by the use of special wooden clappers called *ngbengbe* by the net-hunters of the Epulu region, *epopo* or *koko* by the archers further east.

Many different kinds of honey are recognized, and each has its own distinctive taste. All that I tasted were exceptionally sweet except for the *apuma* honey, which is very liquid and highly fermented by the time it is collected late in the season. Most honey is found high up in boles in the upper branches of the tallest trees. This is always collected by men and youths who can climb trees, unless the diameter is too great, simply by exerting lateral pressure on the trunk with their arms while they move their feet up, pulling themselves close to the trunk with a jerk as they move their arms up. If a tree is too wide to climb this way, they may loop a vine around it, holding the ends with their hands, or they may climb a smaller tree nearby and jump across where the branches meet higher up. Hollow trunks or branches are used by bees as hives.

Other honey is found a few feet above ground level, again in a hollow tree trunk, and this is the only kind of honey, except for the rare *sundu*, which is found in the ground, that a woman may collect.

The actual collecting procedure is the same. If the entrance to the hive is small, it has to be widened with an ax. Then a leaf tube in which there are smoldering embers is introduced into the hole, and by blowing through the other end, the Mbuti fills the hive with smoke and drives out the bees. Most of the bees do not sting at all, and those that do sting do not seem to cause any great pain. Even before they have all left the hive the collector puts his arm in and pulls out handfuls of honey, eating it on the spot, sharing it with friends who may be helping him. When they have had their fill they throw down what is left to those waiting below. If by themselves, they fill a special bark honey container or a basket lined with leaves, and bring the rest back to camp. There it is shared by all, either being eaten in the comb or warmed in leaf containers over the fire. If it is full of white maggots it is particularly prized, and will almost certainly be warmed to loosen the honey until the maggots wriggle, at which point it is consumed with relish.

If the honey is very dirty, full of rotten bark or leaf mold, it is wrapped in a leaf container and immersed in water. When it is pulled

262 out the liquid that drains from it (*kombo*) is caught in leaf cups and
252 drunk. Never is any honey wasted, never is it kept or used in the preparation of other foods; what is not consumed on the spot is eaten or drunk the moment it is brought back into camp.

261 There is a craving for honey during the season that never seems to
262 be satisfied. No amount of alternative foods, even meat, can reduce
222 this passion for honey. Each band has its own way of listening for
[825] the telltale sound of bees swarming. Among some, a leaf is rubbed between the hands, which are then rubbed across the forehead to enable the hunter to see the bees high up in their hives. I found this practice among the eastern archers. Elsewhere, throughout the net-hunting
[184] region and also among the western archers, at least, the chameleon
[825] (*ameuli*) is believed to lead the Mbuti to honey by uttering a long-drawn-out throaty cry. Chameleons, however, are not known to be
[136] capable of making any such noise, and the noted ornithologist Dr. James Chapin claims to have tracked this weird sound down to the *Sarothrura elegans*, a bird with a skinny pouch in its neck that enables it to give an unbroken wail lasting fifteen seconds or more.

221 But most noticeable among a people who take the success of
222 hunting and gathering so much for granted is the presence of honey-
53 collecting magic, and an inordinate emphasis on song and dance,
789 legend-telling and other recreational activities. There is no doubt that whatever else it may be, the honey season is also a festive season where celebration is the order of the day, even at the cost of a relatively empty stomach.

221 Some activities are purely recreational, such as spinning tops made
222 of nut sections, and gambling with dried seeds thrown on the ground
524 to make up a total number that is a multiple of four. Others are educational, and in particular the honey swing is for training youngsters
[525] in agility at heights, as are the informal contests at climbing dangling
[868] vines. The honey swing is suspended from two high branches, so that it has a long, powerful arc. The youths line up and one jumps into the bend of the vine that forms the seat and sets the swing in motion. As the swing moves backwards, a youth runs forward, catching onto the side of the vine, giving it added momentum. As it carries him off the ground, he throws his legs forward and up over his head and into the swing just as the previous occupant jumps to the ground.

The younger children also play with smaller swings, and they have their own game of climbing saplings until there are so many of them that the young tree bends to the ground. The children then leap to

THE ECONOMY

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Because of the rarity of ritual performances there is one which should be mentioned here, though it seems unique and known only to net-hunters as far as I could ascertain. The ritual involves the building of a fire, with much greater care and concern than the hunting fire or the *molimo* fire, and it is believed specifically that the correct performance of this ritual will lead the Mbuti to honey and/or bring the bees, and their honey, closer to the Mbuti. A full description is given in the section on religion and magic (pp. 231-33). Here it need only be said that the preparations, including the digging of small trenches for water and the use of special woods and leaves, are designed to give the maximum amount of smoke. The lighting of the fire is accompanied by blowing on the *madé*^a (cfe: *segbe*) whistles, through which water is first poured.

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All being taken into consideration, the relative lack of magic or ritual associated with food quest, the lack of interest shown in certain readily available forms of food supply such as fish, and the lack of food taboos all confirm the abundance of forest foods and the adequacy of Mbuti technology. This is important in considering the over-all economic system.

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ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF TERRITORY

While the environment does not, through areas of shortage or abundance, determine the location of hunting bands, it does provide natural boundaries which form convenient borders between each hunting band. The total territory is more than ample for the total population, and the even distribution of game and vegetable foods means that there are no preferential areas that might make for rivalry between one band and the next. There is, in any case, a safety factor in that the bands are arranged side by side, in several vast circles, in the center of each of which the boundaries are so loosely drawn that there is effectively a no-man's-land, in which anyone may hunt and where bands occasionally, though rarely, may come in contact with each other.

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The only territory to be considered, then, is that of the individual hunting band. This is again, in all cases except possibly the area

^a The *madé* is a conical pipe, open at both ends, made of two hollowed-out cross-sections cut lengthwise, bound together either by *nkusa* twine or by strips of vine. The pouring of water, which is comparable to the pouring of water through the *molimo* trumpet (see Chapter 14) may have ritual significance, but is explained invariably and unhesitatingly as being necessary simply to get a better sound. It swells the wood and binds the sections closer to each other.

MAGIC, WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY

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and because she was my grandmother I could not strike her or stop her, and she ran off down the trail. 539

"As she was running she changed into a spirit again so that she could run faster, and as soon as my grandmother was a spirit once more I could fight, so I fought and fought, and the spirit nearly killed me, and he went off in the manner of spirits and left me with nothing, not even my basket.

"When I came to the village I was crying because I had nothing to offer my master, and when my master asked me what was wrong I told him this story. He was terribly sorry because he knew what dreadful lives we Mbuti lead, surrounded by all these bad spirits. He said if it was not for the spirits he would come into the forest and hunt himself, but everyone knows how dangerous the spirits are to villagers. Then I asked him if I could have some rice, as I had lost all my own food as well as his. He said, 'Of course, my poor Mbuti. You have tried to help your master, and you can't help it if you are just an Mbuti and have to live among all those dreadful spirits.' 539 186 571 (262) •

"So he gave me the rice and plantains and I came away happy. How kind the villagers are to their 'poor Mbuti'!"

Such stories are legion, being told by the Mbuti almost every time they are questioned by the villagers as to why they have brought no meat. They are equally, if not even more frequently, told, however, in the forest hunting camps, and are part of the constant effort of the Mbuti to affirm at all times the distinction between the two worlds, the forest and the village. Magic, witchcraft, sorcery and the belief in forest spirits are all turned to the same effect, among others, and combine to keep the worlds apart not only in theory but also in practice. 538 186 829

PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZATION (1)

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is essential, and gathering, though done mostly by women, may also be done by men when opportunity affords. Perhaps the most significant activity that is generally performed by women is that of house-building. The only men I have seen build their own houses have been bachelors or widowers, and even then they will frequently get women to do this for them. The woman builds the house; she has the final say in selecting the site. She is in charge of the family hearth, where the cooking is done and around which the family eats and sleeps. Her husband may eat with other men at the central hearth, so the family fire may be said to be of major importance to her and her children. And it is precisely at the parental level that the personal terminology differentiates the sexes. 562
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Looking for significant differences in attitudes and relationships between a child and its mother and father, it is plain that the mother is regarded as the source of food, despite the fact that the father is the prime force in the hunt. It might be worth mentioning again here that vegetable foods (entirely discounting village influence) form the bulk of any forest diet, and their nutritive value is probably equal at least to that of the game consumed. In any case, the father gives the game and any vegetables he may have gathered to his wife, who cooks the food and distributes it. A hungry child looks to any one of his classificatory mothers for food, not to his fathers. His most likely chance of finding it will be at the hearth of his nuclear family, but any mother is under as strong an obligation to feed him as the mother from whose stomach he came. 593
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There is no doubting the difference in the emotional connotations of *ema* and *eba*, differences that are not found to exist in attitudes to the sexes at other age levels. *Ema* (mother) is associated with love (*ekondi*); *eba* (father) is associated with authority (*mota*). We have referred a number of times to the habit of the Mbuti addressing the forest as *ema* and *eba*, and although I can adduce no body of evidence to indicate on what occasions it is addressed by which term, it would seem to reflect the attitude of the individual at the moment of address, and the frequency with which the forest is addressed, as both indicate something of great importance in understanding the Mbuti value system, upon which social order so largely depends. The forest is not only the provider, it is also the ruler; it is to be regarded with affection and respect, and under all circumstances to be trusted.³ 601
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³ Schebesta (1952, 340) asserts: "Les noms attribués à Dieu relèvent de deux catégories. Ou bien on l'invoque simplement sous ceux d'afa, bapapa, odu . . . père, grand-

THE FOREST PEOPLE

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832 dabate still had her fine maiden's figure, with firm upstanding breasts.
826 Nobody ever mentioned the fact that they were childless. Kondabate
[826] decorated herself more than any other Pygmy girl I have known,
156 and by every possible means, Negro and Pygmy. She not only dyed
832 her body with designs of vines and fruits, painted on with the black
302 juice of the gardenia fruit, but she also had elaborate patterns cicatrized on her stomach, and her teeth were filed to sharp points so that when she smiled or laughed, as she frequently did, she looked
[361] just a little dangerous. Kondabate decided to build her house to the north of the hillock, so that she was next to old Sau, and opposite her father.

765 During the afternoon Amabosu, Sau's son—the great singer—went around from hut to hut with Manyalibo's adopted son, Madyadya. (Manyalibo had offered his molimo for Balekimito's festival, as Ekianga said he had none.) The two youths stood outside the
[283] entrance to each hut with a basket and a length of cord made from *nkusa* vine, the kind of cord used for making hunting nets. Madyadya held one end of the cord while Amabosu tied the other in a
[262] noose and laid it in the doorway of the hut. The owner of the hut, or her husband if she was not there, would put a small bunch of bananas in the noose, or a manioc root, or a bundle of mushrooms, or perhaps even a small piece of meat, and Madyadya would jerk the string taut. After a brief mock struggle he would haul in the catch and put it in his basket, then go on to the next hut. From every hut
765 the two collected an offering of food in this way. When their basket
392 was full they hung it up on a tree stump beside the central fire that was now blazing between Manyalibo's hut and the hut his daughter was busily making. This fire had itself been made up from offerings of wood collected from each family hearth. I remembered seeing Manyalibo go around taking an ember or log from every fireplace, whether the owners were there or not.

765 I noticed that only men sat at this fire and asked Kenge why this
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THE SONG OF THE FOREST

no longer worried me that the trumpet was a metal drainpipe instead of a piece of bamboo or wood, because now that I could not see it I realized that Ausu was right. It was the sound that mattered. As the men sang in the camp, the voice of the molimo echoed their song, moving about continually so that it seemed to be everywhere at once. During a lull in the singing it started giving animal growls, and the men looked around to make sure that all the women were safely in their huts. Almost immediately Amabosu and Madyadya came running into the camp from the far end, past Cephu's camp, picking their feet up high in the air so that more than ever they seemed to be floating above the ground they trod. They came right up to the fire and squatted down either side of it, the front of the trumpet still held on Madyadya's shoulder as Amabosu warbled softly into the other end. [481]

I noticed that the trumpet was still wet; it must have been given a "drink" just before it was carried into the camp. Now both youths stood up, and with Amabosu singing all the time, in reply to the song of the men, Madyadya took the end of the trumpet in his hands and waved it up and down, passing it through the flames of the molimo fire and over the heads of all of us sitting there. Some of the men took up hot ashes and rubbed them over the trumpet, and some even put live coals in at the far end. As Amabosu sang harder and louder, sparks flew out over Madyadya's shoulder, disappearing into the night with the song. [533]

Then the two of them went dancing off, around the camp once and into the forest. There were a few last defiant bellows from the direction of the river, and no more was heard. The men stopped singing and prepared to eat. Two caldrons had been boiling over the fire, and both were now ready. One contained rice, the other a kind of spinach made from the leaves of the manioc plant. Eaten together they are delicious. I wondered if there would be any precedence as to who should eat first, or if there would be any ritual, but there [262]

THE CRIME OF CEPHU

of protest that not even Cephu would do such a thing. There was much shaking of heads, and when Ekianga arrived and was told what had happened he stood still for a moment, then turned around, looking in all directions to see if there was any sign of smoke from another fire. He said just one word, "Cephu," and spat on the ground. [201]

By the time we got to the place where we were to make our first cast of the nets everyone was more silent and miserable than ever. It did not make matters any better to find Cephu there already, contentedly sitting over a fire eating roast plantains. He looked up and greeted us in a friendly way, and when asked why he had followed his own path he opened his eyes wide and softly said that he had misunderstood and taken the wrong trail. There were angry remarks, but Cephu ignored them all and went on munching at his plantain, smiling at everyone in his kind, gentle way. [242] •

Ekianga and a few others made a brief reconnaissance, and when they came back they gave instructions as to the best direction for setting up the nets. The womenfolk, who had been foraging around for mushrooms and nuts, picked up their baskets and went ahead with the small children. They trod lightly and made no noise beyond an occasional crunch of a rotten branch, buried deep beneath the carpet of leaves. We all spread out in a long semicircle, each man knowing exactly who should be to his right and who to his left. I went with Maipe, who had been sent by Njobo with his net. We soon lost sight and sound of the others, but Maipe knew just where he would be expected to set up his net, and he took a short cut. I lost all sense of direction and could not even tell on which side of us the women were waiting for the signal to beat in toward our nets. We followed a little stream and paused by an enormous outcrop of huge stone boulders, almost perfectly square in shape, some of them eight feet across each face. Maipe looked around, then sat down to wait. After a few minutes Moke's nephew appeared to our left, stringing his net out through the undergrowth as he came. 224

THE PLAY WORLD OF THE BAMBUTI

form that enables them in a moment to know the exact number¹⁷⁷
thrown down. And for another the villagers are not so nimble as the⁵²⁵
Pygmies. When a Pygmy sees that he is going to lose by a couple^[51]
of beans, he quickly drops them from the store he has concealed
between his fingers, or even in his hair, thus by a triumphant jerk
of his hands or his head throwing in the winning beans.

The villagers left that camp stripped of their fish, their tobacco,
and whatever else they had to gamble away, and they soon came
to prefer an alternative route that by-passed our camp.

There are a few villagers that are welcome in a Pygmy camp, but¹⁷⁷
they are rare. Others can come with sackloads of food and still get¹⁸⁶
a cold reception. I have seen this happen; as soon as the Pygmies⁵⁷⁴
have divided up the food they send the villagers on their way. But
others can come empty-handed and be received gladly, because they
understand the Pygmies and the forest. For the Pygmies this is the^[828]
criterion of a "real person," as opposed to the animal-humans who
live in permanent villages out in the open, away from the shelter
and affection of the trees.

Any visitations by villagers are temporary, and they usually have⁶⁴⁸
some political significance. A Negro chief who wants to win more¹⁷⁷
Pygmies to his village may send out a son with gifts to stay in a
Pygmy camp. Every day more gifts and food are sent out so that
he can distribute these. It is a risky business because, as the villagers
say, "The BaMbuti eat us up until we have nothing left for our-
selves!" But if a chief's son wins the affection of the Pygmies, his
father will have won a steady supply of meat—for a time, anyway.

One afternoon I saw two village girls arrive, followed by two¹²³
servants who threw down loads of plantains and sweet bananas, and¹⁷⁷
a sack of manioc flour. The servants left and the girls came over and^[262]
sat down unconcernedly at Masamba's fire. Masamba came out of^[521]
her hut and greeted them with warmth, and soon a number of

MOLIMO: THE DANCE OF DEATH

The evening meal was a good one, as the Pygmies had brought in far more meat than they allowed to the villagers, and in return for what they had given away they had received generous portions of rice, beans, groundnuts and manioc, and a few of the tiny bitter tomatoes which blend so well with manioc leaves and groundnuts in the making of a sauce. When it was dark, the women and children retired almost immediately, and the men gathered at the central fire where four upright poles indicated the Pygmy version of a *baraza*, or men's meeting place. At first, several villagers came to see what was going on, and the Pygmies sang and danced for them. They sang and danced until the villagers, tired after a heavy day's work in the plantations, went to bed. Then the men really began to sing. They sang and sang until it seemed almost as though we were back in the forest. But any time there was a strange sound, and it was suspected that there might be a villager lurking about, they stopped. They had guards posted all around to make sure they were not caught unawares.

It must have been about three o'clock in the morning when the molimo made its appearance. It came into the camp preceded by two youths holding glowing firebrands in their hands. Waving the brands high in the air, then swinging them down to touch the ground, they laid a fiery path for the molimo to follow. It was stately and imposing. Following this path of glowing cinders the molimo circled the village several times and then came to rest by the fire, where it sang very quietly. Just as I wondered if it was really going to sing as it did in the forest it moved off, and the tempo increased. Surrounded now by all the youths, the molimo started running around, faster and faster, making lightning swoops on the group of older men who were sitting by the fire. The rest of the men were either dancing in a frenzy around the fire itself, as if protecting it, or else they were with the molimo. I heard a crunching sound as the molimo plowed through a small field of sugar cane at the edge of the vil-

THE DREAM WORLD

influences of the villagers, particularly witchcraft. The theory was that they would be independent because they would no longer have to rely on the villagers for plantains, rice, peanuts, or other village foods. In point of fact the only thing for which the Pygmies might really be considered to depend on their neighbors was metal for their knife and spear blades. And this was the one thing the model plan for liberation did not teach them to produce or work for themselves.

It may have been coincidence, or it may have been the result of all this talk of Pygmy villages and of the way that elsewhere the forest was being cut down by modern machinery to build new roads, to open up new mines, or to cultivate more coffee, but within a few days what had been a happy-go-lucky camp became silent and depressed. The unhappy Pygmies argued that the more the forest was cut down for roads and mines and foreign plantations, the more would have to be cut down to make more plantations to feed all the laborers. It was not a happy outlook for them. Then, as always happened when they were upset, they began to sing one evening. They sang and sang, and even those who had been sleeping came out to join in.

During a pause between songs, while everyone was silent, we heard quite distinctly the long-drawn-out whistling cry that the Pygmies say comes from the chameleon. There was a shout of delight, and the singing immediately started again, but this time to a quite different tempo. The rhythm was given out by the sharp clapping of two short sticks which Amabosu had quickly cut from a nearby tree. They rang clear and true. The cry of the chameleon and the use of the *ngbengbe* sticks meant only one thing—there was honey nearby. Within a few days there was not a Pygmy left in the village.

Of all the many foods in the forest, honey attracts the Pygmies the most strongly. At all times of the year game is to be caught, different kinds of mushrooms and fruits and nuts and berries are to be

THE FOREST PEOPLE

222 gathered, but the forest gives its people honey only during two happy
• 262 months. It gives with even greater abundance, however, and the
honey season is a season for abandoned merry-making, when even
the cares of hunting become unimportant, as each individual, young
or old, male or female, sets off every morning in quest of this precious
gift. Above all, it is a season for rejoicing, for dancing and singing.

222 It is also a season when hunting groups split up into even smaller
621 units, each going its own way, claiming certain honey trees for its
own by marking them with a vine tied around the base or with some
other sign that they know will be respected by all other Pygmies.

Only villagers would be capable of breaking such a trust. And so it
222 is also a time when the Pygmies tell stories for the benefit of the
177 villagers of the dreadful and dangerous spirits that they have to fight
in order to get the honey. Naturally enough, then, it is a time when
the villagers prefer to leave the Pygmies, and the forest, well alone.

222 Cephu was already off on his own, slyly camping near the valley
621 that divides the territory of the Epulu Pygmies from that of the
next group to the west. He had relatives in both groups, and he felt
able to claim trees in both territories, depending on where he thought
he would do best. Those that were left split into two bands. One
set off with Ekianga, far away to the north of Kaweki's fishing camp.
There they hoped to combine good hunting with the honey quest.

[439] A few made a permanent halfway camp so that they could act as a
convenient relay station between Ekianga and the village, using the
surplus meat to obtain luxuries that would help make the season
even more festive.

222 Masisi, however, refused to have anything to do with this plan.
621 The honey season was no time to be bothered with hunting, he said,
578 and in any case he was fed up with village food and village tobacco
177 and dirty village water. He wanted to forget about the village and
eat nothing but forest food. He decided on an area that was little
frequented. There was a great deal of dissension among those who

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sobbed her heart out—probably for the first time in her wonderful, hard-bitten old life.

The days that followed were full of happiness for everyone. Once Lizabeti got over her fright I made her practice regularly, to give her more strength in her good leg. She was soon able to stand up by herself, using the crutches for a lever. Not once did she fall. And the other children cut themselves crutches so that they could join in the fun, and together they found a new world of delight. When I was not coaxing Lizabeti to use her crutches more and more, someone else was, for everyone was anxious to see her fly over the ground just like Kenge, who by now was a master acrobat on his crutches, from which he refused to be parted.

In other respects, however, the camp became less pleasant, at any rate for me. The bees began to come in droves after their stolen honey. All day long they buzzed angrily around, so that we kept smoky fires in our huts night and day.

Almost every hour someone returned from a secret forage, with leaf bundles tied to his belt, dripping the sticky liquid down his legs. Sometimes it was too liquefied to be eaten, and then the whole bundle was simply dipped into a bowl of clear forest water, making a sweet-tasting drink. But far more popular was the whole comb which could be eaten grubs, larvae, bees and all. If it was very hard, it was first softened over the fire, and this made the grubs squirm more actively so that the honey worked its own way down your throat. It was, however, the best-tasting honey of all, despite the insects.

Apuma was yet another kind of honey, which came later in the season. It was full of grubs too, but they were all dead, and the honey had fermented. It was made by a different kind of bee and tasted like a bitter liqueur; if eaten in any quantity it could be highly intoxicating. But the Pygmy needs no stimulant in the honey season. He is drunk with the forest, with its beauty and abundance, and with the love it showers on its people. Every night that tiny

Mbuti

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group and a stranger in the camp, if it is a different one.

PYGMY SYMBOLISM

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Food tabus.—The pygmy recognizes certain animals as symbols of definite relationships or identifications, in connection with which recognition he observes special food tabus.

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This principle is particularly involved in connection with the animals which represent the clan totems. Each clan has its own private totem animal, which is not, in most cases, actually considered an ancestor. Rather, it has acquired its position because, in the local mythology, an animal of the same species performed some special act of kindness which got one of the clan ancestors out of a perilous situation.

The animals which symbolize clans are always animals which are hunted by men; they are never slow-game animals, which women collect. Vegetable species are never used as totems. The totems are animals which may or may not be caught, about whose capture there is some element of chance, some possibility of crisis, and they are usually food animals, although leopards and chimpanzees, which are off the main dietary line, are totemic animals.

The pygmy will avoid eating the flesh of his own clan totem, but he can eat the flesh of totemic animals of any other clan. However, the pygmy recognizes seven species of antelope, and a dozen of small monkeys; and the clan totem will be, for instance, one species of antelope, rather than all antelopes. Therefore, these tabus do not cause anyone much discomfort, for no one species of these animals accounts for more than a small fraction of the total food supply, and each clan can eat six out of seven kinds of antelope, or eleven out of twelve kinds of monkeys.

[P. 337-8]

825 Not only does the pygmy avoid eat-
614 ing the flesh of his totemic animal, but
262 he cannot even eat out of any dish or
container in which any of its flesh has
been cooked; moreover, he avoids the
animal itself when he sees it in the
forest, and may even flee from it.
Carrying the principle of avoidance
even further, a pygmy whose totem
animal is the chimpanzee will not even
eat the berries that are that animal's
favorite food.

The breach of any of these tabus is
supposed to bring on illness or death,
while their observance is, of course, an
automatic mechanism to intensify the
mutual relations of the members of the
clan, who may be scattered through the
forest in different bands. As the clan
members become more and more dis-
tant from each other, as their frequency
of relations falls below a certain level,
the tabus will break down and the
scattered members will take over the
prohibitions of the people among whom
they live and with whom they have in
time come to identify themselves.

784 Besides the clan food tabus, there are
834 sex tabus, condition tabus, and per-
sonal tabus. The sex tabus serve to
symbolize the difference in activities be-
tween men and women. Women and
262 children will eat frogs and toads, but
men refuse to touch them. These am-
phibians probably symbolize water, and
hence storms, and since it is the men
who do the hunting they are the ones
who are peculiarly vulnerable to
storms.

784 The condition tabus are the same
262 type as those described by A. R. Brown
[17] in *The Andaman Islanders*. A pygmy
going through the puberty period, preg-
nancy, mourning, or any other crisis in
the life cycle will abstain from certain
foods, and the animals concerned are
thus symbols of this critical situation.
262 The personal tabus involve simply the
refusal of an individual to eat certain
[P.338-A]

- 262 foods. This may be due to a recognized allergy, to some unpleasant association, or to any one of a number of causes. The animals involved in these tabus include porcupines, snakes, and other slow game not found among the clan totems.

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773 The animals of the forest, which symbolize clans, sexes, and individual and conditional idiosyncrasies, are very real people to the pygmies. In the old days, the mythical time, they could all talk and were on an even footing with men. Each species was symbolized by one individual, who was given an honorific name, as Mr. Turtle, Mr. Gray Antelope, or Mr. Chimpanzee. Mr. Turtle was a very wise and tricky individual, and the smallest antelope of all was King of the Beasts. The pygmies and their Negro hosts have an elaborate folklore about these animals and all their doings which might shed considerable light on their human relations.

821 **Ritual symbols.**—To the pygmies, water, rain, storm, thunder, lightning, snakes, and rainbows are all parts of a single symbolic configuration. The elements of this configuration, of course, represent the sudden rainstorms which arise without warning in the afternoons and sometimes, rarely, in the mornings as well. These may prevent hunting; flood huts; cause dead limbs to fall, crushing huts and killing people; or occasionally kill them by bolts of lightning. No other element in their life causes so much disturbance or upsets them so profoundly.

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[77] Both pygmies and Negroes believe in a *Nyama ya mai* (Swahili) or water animal, who lurks in streams and plays dangerous tricks on people. Sometimes he tips canoes over; sometimes he will grab the ankle of a woman fording a stream, so that she slips, and may even drown. If any serious mishap occurs in or in connection with the
[p. 338-B]